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REVIEWS AND NEW BOOKS

General Works, Theory and Its History

Die Theorie der Volkswirtschaft: Einführung in die Soziologie und die politische Oekonomie. By PETER MASSLOW. Translated into German by Dr. M. NACHIMSON. (Leipzig: Verlag von Arthur Kade. 1912. Pp. viii, 293. 6 m.)

This is a pretentious work. As its title indicates, it aims to lay the foundations of both sociology and economics. The author tells us that the occasion of writing the book originally was an invitation, from the Council of the Higher School of Agriculture at St. Petersburg, to deliver a series of lectures on industrial evolution. The author complains that practically all of the works in economics lack the evolutionary point of view. Instead of explaining how present economic categories have arisen through the transition from a natural to an exchange economy, economists take for granted present capitalistic society with all of its categories. Even in the works of the representatives of the historical school, one finds, least of all, an analysis of economic life in its totality as presented by human history. So we seek in vain, he says, an answer to the most important question of all: the question of the distribution of the forces of production in different branches of production; as, for example, why a certain amount of labor force is applied to the production of articles of luxury, another amount to the production of grain, etc. In brief, our author puts forth the claim that the question of the evolution and distribution of the forces of production is and remains the cardinal question both of political economy and of sociology.

Marx, alone, of economic writers, has clearly seen this. In the preface to his work, *Zur Kritik politischen Oekonomie*, he set forth his celebrated sociological explanation of the historical evolution of society:

At a certain stage of development the material forces of production in society come into contradiction with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations, within which they have been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then enters an epoch of social revolution.

This explanation of historical evolution of society is accepted today, our author says, by practically all sociologists. The only

trouble with this explanation is that Marx does not explain what he means by "the forces of production" (*Produktivkräfte*), or "the evolution of the forces of production." Not only economists, but also sociologists, ought to direct their chief attention to the evolution and distribution of the forces of production.

The idea of most Marxists is that Marx meant by "the forces of production," technical progress in the narrow sense of the term, that is, changes in the methods of production. This, our author shows, is an inadequate conception of the forces of production:

As social productive forces, we understand the sum of active labor and of the means of production which are necessary for further production. The development of the productive forces of society can accordingly, proceed with an unaltered expenditure of labor as a consequence of technical progress, as well as also, conversely, with a stationary condition of technique and an increased expenditure of labor.

In other words, the increase of population and technical progress are the active factors in social evolution, since the economic motive of seeking the greatest gain for the least effort remains a constant element in all periods of human history.

This brief statement of the point of view of the author is sufficient to indicate the nature of his work. It is almost wholly in the way of elaboration of Marx's "historical materialism." From this point of view he takes up successively in part I the evolution of industrial systems; in part II the organization of industry; and in part III the distribution of the forces of production. His conclusion is clearly enough indicated in his premises. It is that the direction and character of human activity are determined through conditions lying outside of the individual. These have been so arranged that a minority of the population exploits the majority. The forms of exploitation have changed from age to age, but exploitation itself has remained. Only with a new organization of production, in which land and all the means of production shall belong to society, will it be possible to put an end to this exploitation of the majority by a small minority. Production must, in other words, be organized, not in the interest of the individual, but in the interest of society. Only then will the organization of production become a conscious product of the human will in the truest sense.

Criticism of such a work is almost superfluous. The writer of this notice does not feel competent to judge the value of the contribution which the book makes to economic theory. But from

a sociological point of view, it may be safely said that the book adds nothing of value to the already voluminous discussion of historical materialism, or economic determinism. It certainly is not true that Marx's generalization is accepted by most sociologists. Rather the consensus among the leading English-speaking sociologists, at least, is that the economic factor is but one factor among many, though a very important one, in social evolution; that it determines the general outline or framework of our social life rather than its more intimate, personal relationships and ideals.

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Zur Entwicklung der nationalökonomischen Ansichten Fr. Lists von 1820-1825. By ERNST LADENTHIN. Studien zur Sozial- Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungsgeschichte, VII. (Vienna: Verlagsbuchhandlung von Carl Konegen. 1912. Pp. 126. 3.50 m.)

This clear-cut and interesting study in *Dogmengeschichte* is one of the monographs which are appearing under the editorship of Professor Carl Grünberg, of Vienna. It was suggested by Professor Wilbrandt of Tübingen, and was completed under Professor Grünberg. It is an attempt to trace the origin of List's economic ideas; but is largely negative in results, as it spends much of its force in disproving previous theories on this point.

One group of writers has emphasized Adam Müller as List's forerunner. Another has stressed his American experience. Some—like the reviewer—have allowed weight to both factors. Dr. Ladenthin, however, maintains that List drew most largely upon certain contemporary French writers. The chief merit of the work is that it brings out the significance of the years 1819-1827 in List's life, and analyzes the influence which Chaptal, Louis Say, and Ferrier exerted over him.

To those who hold that the American Daniel Raymond changed List's ideas, through his *Thoughts on Political Economy* (1820), Ladenthin replies: (1) Signs of List's national-protection ideas appear in a writing of 1820; (2) the change was in part due to List's observance of the effects of the Napoleonic continental blockade and the needs of his country; (3) before going to America, List read widely and was active along lines leading to his later conclusions; (4) in 1822 he planned to translate several French writers who held nationalistic theories.